EXODUS

Chapter 8

**1 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. 2 If you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs. 3 The Nile will teem with frogs. They will come up into your palace and your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your officials and on your people, and into your ovens and kneading troughs. 4 The frogs will go up on you and your people and all your officials.’ ” 5 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your staff over the streams and canals and ponds, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt.’ ” 6 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land. 7 But the magicians did the same things by their secret arts; they also made frogs come up on the land of Egypt. 8 Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Pray to the Lord to take the frogs away from me and my people, and I will let your people go to offer sacrifices to the Lord.” 9 Moses said to Pharaoh, “I leave to you the honor of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile.” 10 “Tomorrow,” Pharaoh said. Moses replied, “It will be as you say, so that you may know there is no one like the Lord our God. 11 The frogs will leave you and your houses, your officials and your people; they will remain only in the Nile.”12 After Moses and Aaron left Pharaoh, Moses cried out to the Lord about the frogs he had brought on Pharaoh. 13 And the Lord did what Moses asked. The frogs died in the houses, in the courtyards and in the fields. 14 They were piled into heaps, and the land reeked of them. 15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said.**

**8:1 I**f God’s people are to serve and worship Him, they must be free from bondage. (TLSB)

**8:2–4** See note, 9:3. *frogs*.

**8:2** *plague*. Lit, “strike.” (TLSB)

 *I will plague your whole country with frogs.* The frog (or toad) was deified in the goddess Heqt, who assisted women in childbirth. (CSB)

Small Nile frogs. The Egyptian goddess Heqt was thought to take the form of a frog that helped women as they gave birth to children. This is the second plague. The first three plagues covered the whole land and fell upon both Israelites and Egyptians. (TLSB)

**8:3** *come up.* The frogs abandoned the Nile and swarmed over the land, perhaps because the unusually high concentration of bacteria-laden algae had by now proved fatal to most of the fish, thus polluting the river. (CSB)

**8:8–10:24** Note Pharaoh’s responses: plead (8:8); sacrifice (8:25); I have sinned (9:27); only men may go (10:11); forgive my sin (10:17); only people may go (10:24). Over time, he recognized his inability to resist the Lord’s purpose. (TLSB)

**8:8** Pharaoh regarded the God of Israel as the author of the plague and entreated Moses to intercede with God to remove it. (TLSB)

**8:9–10** *Be pleased to command me*. Showing humility, Moses placed himself under Pharaoh’s authority. Ambrose : “[Moses] knew that the king would not keep true to his promises, yet he thought it right and good to pray when asked to do so, to bless when wronged, to forgive when besought” (*NPNF* 2 10:82). (TLSB)

 *cut off*. Can mean they were restricted, but is also an expression for death..

 *Tomorrow*. Moses let Pharaoh set the time for the frogs to be removed. The timed conclusion of the plague would again demonstrate its miraculous character. (TLSB)

**8:11–13** *The frogs shall go away* … *The frogs died*. God may have used the red, putrid waters of the Nile to kill the frogs.

**8:12** *Moses cried to the Lord*. Earnest prayer, after which God removed the plague, though perhaps not as Pharaoh expected. *as* … *agreed*. Moses acted in good faith. (TLSB)

**8:13** *the Lord did what Moses asked.* For similar occurrences see v. 31; 1Sa 12:18; 1Ki 18:42–45; Am 7:1–6. *The frogs died.* Probably because they had been infected by the bacteria (*Bacillus anthracis*) in the Nile algae (see note on v. 3). (CSB)

The Lord hears and answers out of His divine, fatherly goodness and mercy. (TLSB)

**8:15** *respite*. Relief from overpowering pressure. (TLSB)

 *would not listen*. Pharaoh proved himself a liar, a sin he had charged to Moses (5:9). (TLSB)

 **8:1–15** This sets a recurring theme of sin, oppression (the plagues), repentance, and deliverance. Magicians, sorcerers, and charlatans can not stop the power of God. As the intensity of temporal punishment increases in terms of social and economic impact, God still remains slow to anger and desires to deliver sinners by His grace. • Lord, when I am weak in faith, strengthen me. When I am cold in love, warm me so that the love Christ first worked in me through His Word and Spirit may go out to my neighbor. Uphold me that I might remain in You even unto life everlasting. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Plague of Gnats*

**16 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the ground,’ and throughout the land of Egypt the dust will become gnats.” 17 They did this, and when Aaron stretched out his hand with the staff and struck the dust of the ground, gnats came upon men and animals. All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats. 18 But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals. 19 The magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the Lord had said.**

**8:16** *dust will become gnats.* The word “dust” is perhaps a reference to the enormous number (see, e.g., Ge 13:16) of the gnats, bred in the flooded fields of Egypt in late autumn. The word translated “gnats” occurs only here and in Ps 105:31; perhaps insects known to us as mosquitoes. (CSB)

They usually breed in the flooded fields of Egypt in late autumn. But here they arise miraculously from the dust Aaron struck. Barely visible to the eye, they sting and cause painful skin irritation; they creep into eyes and noses. (TLSB)

**8:18** *The magicians* … *could not*. The Egyptian magicians displayed the impotence of their secret arts next to the creative power of the true God. (TLSB)

**8:19** *finger of God.* A concise and colorful figure of speech referring to God’s miraculous power (see 31:18; Ps 8:3). Jesus drove out demons “by the finger of God” (Lk 11:20). Cf. the similar use of the phrase “hand of the Lord” in 9:3. (CSB)

Denotes creative omnipotence. Generic Hbr *’elohim* is used here instead of the specific *yahweh*. The magicians realized their powers had been surpassed. Trickery was now out of the question. (TLSB)

**8:16–19** The plague of gnats is more intense than the previous plagues, and the magicians concede that there is a God greater than the ones they serve. God’s judgment increases in magnitude as this plague drives Pharaoh and his magicians toward despair. People who trust Christ the Lord are drawn closer to Him in times of tribulation, seeking His forgiveness, comfort, strength, and healing for the sake of His cross and resurrection. • O God, our Father, what would we be if You would forsake us? What would we do if You would withdraw Your hand? How quickly the prudent become simple; the wise become fools. In Christ Jesus, daily increase our faith that we may recognize Your loving hand at work in our lives. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Plague of Flies*

**20 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as he goes to the water and say to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. 21 If you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you and your officials, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies, and even the ground where they are. 22 “ ‘But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the Lord, am in this land. 23 I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This miraculous sign will occur tomorrow.’ ” 24 And the Lord did this. Dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh’s palace and into the houses of his officials, and throughout Egypt the land was ruined by the flies. 25 Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land.” 26 But Moses said, “That would not be right. The sacrifices we offer the Lord our God would be detestable to the Egyptians. And if we offer sacrifices that are detestable in their eyes, will they not stone us? 27 We must take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, as he commands us.” 28 Pharaoh said, “I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the Lord your God in the desert, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me.” 29 Moses answered, “As soon as I leave you, I will pray to the Lord, and tomorrow the flies will leave Pharaoh and his officials and his people. Only be sure that Pharaoh does not act deceitfully again by not letting the people go to offer sacrifices to the Lord.” 30 Then Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord, 31 and the Lord did what Moses asked: The flies left Pharaoh and his officials and his people; not a fly remained. 32 But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.**

**8:21** *I will send swarms of flies.* Probably *Stomoxys calcitrans*, which would have multiplied rapidly as the receding Nile left breeding places in its wake. Full-grown, such flies infest houses and stables and bite men and animals; mentioned only here and in Ps 78:45; 105:31. (CSB)

More aggressive than gnats, buzzing the ears and landing esp on the edges of the eyelids. The Egyptians venerated flies and beetles. (TLSB)

**8:22** *I will deal differently.* See 33:16. God makes a “distinction” (v. 23) between Moses’ people and the pharaoh’s people in this plague as well as in the fifth (see 9:4, 6), the seventh (see 9:26), the ninth (see 10:23) and the tenth (see 11:7)—and probably also the sixth and eighth (see 9:11; 10:6)—demonstrating that the Lord can preserve his own people while judging Egypt. *Goshen.* See note on Ge 45:10. (CSB)

The Lord condemned the Egyptians but delivered the Israelites from evil (9:4, 11, 26; 10:6, 23; 11:7). He proved that Israel had His blessing. (TLSB)

**8:24** *the land was ruined*. Flies killed plants and caused disfiguring swelling in humans. (TLSB)

**8:25** *sacrifice to your God within the land*. Pharaoh compromised. (TLSB)

**8:26** *detestable to the Egyptians.* See Ge 46:34; see also Ge 43:32 and note. (CSB)

The sacrifices would not be pure according to the rites of the Egyptians. This would be blasphemy toward their gods, and they would likely stone the Israelites. (TLSB)

 *stone us?* The penalty for blasphemy could be delivered by a mob, without Pharaoh’s consent. (TLSB)

**8:27** *three days’ journey* … *wilderness*. Where Israel is beyond Pharaoh’s domination and oversight (cf Gn 30:36). (TLSB)

**8:28** *you must not go very far*. A counterproposal that still exerted Pharaoh’s and Egypt’s control and standards. (TLSB)

 *Plead for me*. That the swarms be removed. (TLSB)

**8:31** *the Lord did what Moses asked.* See note on v. 13. (CSB)

**8:20–32** The Lord distinguishes between Egypt and Israel by protecting His people in Goshen from the plagues. Pharaoh wants the Israelites to sacrifice and worship according to his expectations, but Moses could never allow this. The means and character of worship must be subject to God’s Word rather than the will of any government or mob. The Lord distinguishes us by His grace and redemption. • O dreadful and severe Judge, wonderful and mysterious are Your judgments. You are so jealous for Your people’s pure praise, sanctified by the blood of Your beloved Son. Keep us in the one true faith. Amen. (TLSB)